United Nations S/PV.8084

Security Council

Seventy-second year

Provisional

8084th meeting
Monday, 6 November 2017, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Cardi	(Italy)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Inchauste Jordán
	China	Mr. Zhang Dianbin
	Egypt	Mr. Aboulatta
	Ethiopia	Mr. Alemu
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Japan	Mr. Kawamura
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Temenov
	Russian Federation	Mr. Iliichev
	Senegal	Mr. Seck
	Sweden	Mr. Skau
	Ukraine	Mr. Yelchenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Allen
	United States of America	Mrs. Haley
	Uruguay	Mr. Bermúdez

Agenda

The situation in the Central African Republic

Report of the Secretary-General on the Central African Republic (S/2017/865)

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17-36466 (E)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Central African Republic

Report of the Secretary-General on the Central African Republic (S/2017/865)

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of the Central African Republic to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mr. Parfait Onanga-Anyanga, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Central African Republic and Head of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic; Mr. Bédializoun Moussa Nébié, Special Representative of the African Union to the Central African Republic; and Mr. Mauro Garofalo, Head of International Relations, Community of Sant'Egidio.

Mr. Nébié is joining us via video-teleconference from Bangui.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2017/865, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in the Central African Republic.

I now give the floor to Mr. Onanga-Anyanga.

Mr. Onanga-Anyanga (*spoke in French*): It is an honour for me to address the Security Council only a few days after the important visit of Secretary-General António Guterres to the Central African Republic. It was a visit rich in symbolism, which he undertook as a signal of the solidarity of the United Nations and the international community with the Government and the people of the Central African Republic so as to ensure that the Central African Republic will remain on the busy international agenda.

I am pleased to take part in this meeting of the Security Council along with other key partners of the Central African Republic and the United Nations, as you noted earlier, Mr. President. This reflects the rich and indispensable collaboration among us.

As noted in the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in the Central African Republic (S/2017/865), this year has been marked by a great many serious incidents. Many more Central Africans have lost their lives. As the deteriorating security situation has not allowed for the sustainable return of those affected since the beginning of the crisis, the country now has nearly 600,000 internally displaced persons and half a million refugees in neighbouring countries. Their fate and the volatility of the security situation have further overshadowed an already disastrous humanitarian environment.

But I must also deplore the violent deaths of many humanitarian workers — 13 in total, the latest of which occurred yesterday — making the Central African Republic the most dangerous country for humanitarian action. It is in that context of unprecedented brutality, where there is often no peace to be preserved, that Blue Helmets are engaged and risk their lives every day. Twelve have succumbed since the beginning of this year, victims of violent targeted attacks, and several others have been wounded. Their hard work and their sacrifice alongside the Central African security forces have maintained a appreciable calm in the capital, Bangui, and elsewhere in the country.

But wherever the presence of the State is lacking, brutal attacks on civilians have persisted, particularly in the south-east and north-west of the country. Although limited in resources, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) increased the number of road patrols, as in Pombolo, to limit the risks to civilians. Redeployment in the affected areas is particularly slowed by the rainy season and acts of sabotage by armed groups.

In addition, with the onset of the dry season and transhumance, there is reason to fear a resurgence of clashes in the west of the country, particularly between local anti-balaka fighters and armed members of the Fulani community or armed elements affiliated with ex-Séléka. Despite the hard work on the ground and the negative impact of the misunderstanding that arises from excessive expectations of the mandate of MINUSCA and inevitably disappointed — although understandably so — the Mission continues to carry out its mandate with courage and determination. That was

recently the case in Bocaranga, where it rebuffed the armed group Retour, réclamation et réhabilitation, or in Bang against elements of the Mouvement patriotique pour la Centrafrique.

The multiplication of hotbeds of tension and the exacerbation of armed violence over a large part of the vast Central African territory highlight the limits of the MINUSCA force, which the withdrawal of Ugandan forces under the mandate of the African Union has accentuated.

It was also in order to better understand the dynamics of the conflict that continues to rage in many parts of the territory, and to appreciate the complexity of our mission, on the eve of the renewal of the MINUSCA mandate, that the Secretary-General visited the Central African Republic from 24 to 27 October. In Bangui and Bangassou, he paid a well-deserved tribute to our troops, recognizing their immense sacrifice and invaluable contribution to the efforts to restore lasting peace in the Central African Republic. The Secretary-General and President Faustin-Archange Touadéra also honoured the thousands of Central Africans who have fallen victim to the armed conflicts that have affected the Central African Republic for decades.

When he left Bangui on 27 October, the Secretary-General noted that the Central African Republic was at a turning point in its history, the outcome of which will depend primarily on the Central Africans themselves. But to succeed, it is undeniable that, at this stage of the country's capabilities, the decisions of the Security Council and the continued support of the international community will continue to be critical to further progress.

That is why the Secretary-General has called for greater solidarity with the Central African Republic, stressing that it is a country that faces immense challenges but also has real opportunities to achieve a political resolution to the crisis and to launch an economic recovery to benefit as many citizens as possible. He pleaded for the strengthening of the legitimate institutions of the country and a substantial increase in the resources of MINUSCA to enable it to better protect the civilian population and support the expansion of State authority.

The Secretary-General also supported greater national responsibility for the security of the country, including through the gradual deployment of Central African armed forces battalions that were retrained by the European Union Military Training Mission in the Central African Republic, in line with paragraph 9 of resolution 2301 (2016). And in order for the peace dividend to be felt without further delay by the Central African people, the Secretary-General also advocated the effective implementation of the National Recovery and Peacebuilding Plan, both in the mobilization of the promised resources and in the carrying out, at the national level, of the selected programmes.

To succeed on all fronts, all actors must be committed to an inclusive political process under the auspices of the President of the Central African Republic. In that respect, the 17 July adoption in Libreville of the road map for peace and reconciliation in the Central African Republic, initiated by the African Union, offers real hope for a lasting exit to the crisis through the voices of dialogue. My brother Moussa Nébié, in Bangui, and I have been having daily discussions on that issue and we are ready to work hand in hand to ensure the success of that important initiative.

MINUSCA will fully support the efforts of the panel of facilitators of the African Initiative and the Government of the Central African Republic so as to ensure its success. Working together, we will also promote local dialogue aimed at achieving a sustainable reduction of violence, better humanitarian access and the return of local Government. Ensuring stability throughout the country will require strengthening the presence and capacity of State institutions at the local level, especially to support dialogue and reconciliation efforts.

I am pleased to report notable progress in the implementation of the National Recovery and Peacebuilding Plan and the Framework for Mutual Engagement, which provide key strategic instruments for strengthening institutions and promoting the economic recovery of the country. But it is regrettable that more than 2 million people in the Central African Republic are in urgent need of food assistance. The humanitarian response plan was revised upwards in August to reflect increased needs, but has only been 34 per cent funded.

Communities devastated by violence often have to take refuge around places of worship, in hospitals and near MINUSCA camps. This forced displacement has created new enclaves in many localities in the east of the country. In Bangassou, Mbomou prefecture, some 1,500 displaced persons — primarily Muslims — found

shelter in the Catholic church premises under the protection of MINUSCA. In Bria, Kaga Bandoro and Bocaranga, thousands of displaced people are suffering the consequences of merciless clashes between anti-Balaka and ex-Séléka elements. The prospects for the return of displaced persons and refugees remain significantly reduced by persistent tensions.

(*spoke in English*)

The Secretary-General's request to increase MINUSCA force level by 900 troops is part of a comprehensive strategy to address the deteriorating situation in close collaboration with the Government, and to create an opportunity to advance the political process. The proposed increase should include highly mobile troops that would provide the force with greater flexibility to rapidly deploy in areas of heightened threat to civilians. We intend to increase our support for and engagement in the political process, as requested by the authorities of the Central African Republic, supported by the African Initiative, together with other important stakeholders, such as the Economic Community of Central African States and the Community of Sant'Egidio — and I am glad to see Mr. Garofalo here with us today — in the knowledge that only a political solution will bring lasting peace to the Central African Republic. We will seek to improve the protection of civilians with a stronger emphasis on early warning and prevention, and we will make greater efforts to ensure humanitarian access to populations in need.

The Mission will also continue to support the restoration of State authority, working together with United Nations agencies, funds and programmes. We will strengthen our support to Central Africa's judicial system and to the security sector, including the gendarmerie, the police and the gradual operationalization of the Central African armed forces units trained by the European Union. In that regard, we applaud the tripartite agreement between the Government, the European Union Military Training Mission in the Central African Republic and MINUSCA for a joint deployment and use of the Central African armed forces.

The Mission I have the honour to lead will spare no effort in helping the Government and the Central African authorities, as well as all national actors committed to peace, to realize the aspirations of their people, especially its valiant youth, women and children, to a safer and more prosperous future. We will do that while ensuring that all of our civilian and uniformed personnel respect more than ever the spirit of the Secretary-General's zero-tolerance policy against sexual exploitation and abuse. During his visit to the Central African Republic, the Secretary-General himself reaffirmed that imperative and when he met the victims of sexual exploitation and abuse, he assured them of all his compassion and determination to eradicate this scourge.

I thank troop-contributing countries that have taken important steps to curb this type of criminal behaviour. Our concerted actions have already resulted in a significant reduction in cases of sexual exploitation and abuse. We can and must do even more.

(*spoke in French*)

I wish to sincerely thank the Council for recognizing the crucial role that MINUSCA plays in the Central African Republic. Significant progress has been achieved through the adoption of resolution 2301 (2016) towards establishing the national and legitimate institutions that are essential to the future of the country. The creation of the Special Criminal Court and the deployment of judicial authorities outside Bangui will allow the slow but gradual return of the rule of law, which will end impunity and the spiral of violence.

During his visit, the Secretary-General called on Central African politician and the leaders of public opinion to take urgent measures to put an end to the political manipulation and instrumentalization of ethnicity or religion, which fuel hatred and violence. There will be no peace in the Central African Republic for some so long as there is no peace for all. The Council's continued commitment will be crucial to the country's long-term stabilization and development efforts. We count on the Council's support to ensure that the current cycle of violence in the Central African Republic is broken and that the resilience and hope shown by so many Central Africans continue to benefit from the unwavering support of the international community.

I should like to borrow an idea from Saint Augustine in saying that, in the case of the Central African Republic, it is better to progress slowly in the right direction — even at a limp — than quickly in the wrong direction. Today, the Central African Republic is moving in the right direction. We must do our utmost to help it to that end. The Secretary-General is committed to that effort, and has called for a great deal of sacrifice, endurance and patience.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Onanga-Anyanga for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Nébié.

Mr. Nébié (*spoke in French*): At the outset, allow me to thank the President of the Council for having invited me to make a briefing on the implementation of the African Initiative for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic. My briefing will focus on the following points, as the President has requested: the status of implementation of the road map for the African Initiative, the agenda in the coming months, the action of the African Union mission in Bangui, the elements hindering the peace process in the Central African Republic, the regional dimension of the crisis and, finally, recommendations.

First, with regard to the state of implementation of the Libreville road map, on 11 September in Bangui, all the structures for the operationalization of the road map for the African Initiative were put in place. Those include the panel of facilitators, the technical committee and the focal point for the Central African State. The panel of facilitators was set up on 11 September and held its first session immediately on 11 and 12 September in Bangui. The participants were the representatives of Angola, the Central African Republic, Congo-Brazzaville, Gabon, Chad, the African Union, the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) and the International Conference of the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR). Those were the panel members referred to in the road map. The United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) was present as an observer.

During the meeting, it was suggested that the panel be extended to all neighbouring countries and to other observers who wished to join. The extraordinary conference of Foreign Ministers of ECCAS, held on 21 October in Libreville, endorsed that proposal, which seeks to strengthen the presence of all countries on the panel.

The technical committee was also formed on 11 September to establish the secretariat of the panel. The committee is made up of representatives of ECCAS, the African Union, the Central African Government and MINUSCA. It holds two meetings per week in preparation for the implementation of the road map. Since its establishment, the technical secretariat has produced a programme of activities and a draft budget. A first programme of activities had been developed, but could not be undertaken due to interference from other regional and subregional agendas. A second programme has been developed that includes the second meeting of the panel of facilitators on 24 and 25 November, followed by a field trip to meet the commanders of the armed groups.

The secretariat has also prepared a draft budget, which is estimated at $4.14 million. ECCAS has already contributed $100,000. The contribution of the African Union is expected in the coming weeks. The African Union's representation in Bangui and the panel secretariat are working hard to mobilize contributions from panel member countries and various partners. MINUSCA provides threefold support to the Initiative in terms of logistics, financial resources and security. It will also manage the first field trip.

Finally, with regard to the focal point, as provided for in the road map, the Central African Government has appointed its focal point, which is already involved in all preparatory processes.

Secondly, with regard to the Initiative's agenda for the coming months, the new programme is established as follows. From 22 November to 15 December, the second meeting of the panel is to be held in Bangui, to be followed by a first field trip to meet armed groups. From 15 to 31 January 2018, the third meeting of the panel will take place, to be followed by the second field trip to meet the armed groups. In February 2018, a dialogue will be held between the Government and the armed groups. In March 2018, an ECCAS summit will be held, with the participation of the African Union, for the signing of a comprehensive peace and reconciliation agreement between the Government and the armed groups.

Thirdly, with regard to the actions of the African Union mission in Bangui, since the formalization of the African Initiative, the African Union and ECCAS have conducted information, awareness-raising and promotion activities, both in the Central African Republic and in neighbouring countries. Following its first meeting in September, the panel of facilitators met with the President of the Republic, the President of the National Assembly, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, MINUSCA, the African Ambassadors Forum, the Coordination Group for the Preparation of and Follow-up to the Meetings of the International Support Group on the Central African Republic, and the international press. Those various meetings allowed the Chair of

the panel to bring to the attention of the authorities the conclusions of the panel's meeting and to solicit their support for the African Initiative and their commitment to dialogue and reconciliation for lasting peace in the Central African Republic. Regarding armed groups, some were sensitized to the African Initiative.

Fourthly, without being exhaustive, the main elements of the blockage of the peace process in the Central African Republic concern the lack of trust between the Government and the governed, the absence of State authority throughout the national territory and the weakness of governance, the persistence of violence committed by armed groups, poverty, the political and religious manipulation of which my colleague, Mr. Onanga-Anyanga, has just spoken, and the low levels of training and education.

Fifthly, with regard to the regional dimension of the crisis, aware that the Central African crisis has serious consequences for neighbouring countries and the subregion, the various subregional organizations — the Economic Community of Central African States, the Central African Economic and Monetary Community and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region — took up the issue and put it on their agenda. Several summits and meetings have thus been held on the question of the Central African Republic to discuss issues concerning security, the economy, refugees and migration.

As Mr. Onanga-Anyanga told the Council earlier, there are 600,000 displaced persons and 500,000 refugees, in addition to the issue of transhumance. The subregional organizations have reaffirmed their determination to contribute to resolving the crisis. At the continental level, on 14 November I will make a presentation to the Peace and Security Council of the African Union on that issue.

Finally, I shall now move on to my recommendations. The Security Council will soon have to renew the MINUSCA mandate. In view of the crisis situation in the Central African Republic, I take this opportunity to make some recommendations, on the one hand, to support the process of dialogue, reconciliation and peace in the Central African Republic, and, on the other, to contribute to the economic recovery that is essential to improving the living conditions and well-being of the population.

First, support for the implementation of the road map for the Initiative will require mobilizing significant financial resources. However, the panel has few resources at its disposal apart from MINUSCA, which is willing to support its first outings in the field. I have already pointed out that the budget is $4.14 million, and the contribution of the African Union is being assessed. I seek the support of Council members for the panel's timely implementation of the programme that I have just outlined.

As for the MINUSCA mandate, given the increased activity of some armed groups, the presence of a deterrent force is necessary to compel armed and uncooperative groups to avoid violence. It is therefore essential that the mandate of MINUSCA not only be renewed, but that it be strengthened to increase its effectiveness on the ground in view of the resurgence of attacks. Similarly, an increase in the number of Blue Helmets would be very useful, as it would increase their presence and visibility on the ground, which should significantly improve the protection of civilian populations.

Thirdly, in the same vein, it is important to relax the arms embargo so as to enable the Government of the Central African Republic to equip its defence and security forces in the greatest possible transparency. These forces were created in a republican spirit to be deployed on the ground and enhance the security of populations, with the support of MINUSCA.

Fourthly, with regard to the promotion of quick-impact projects and humanitarian assistance, widespread impoverishment among the population of the Central African Republic, especially among its young people, is helping to fuel armed groups. That is why humanitarian action must be extended to areas that have not yet been served, and quick-impact and income-generating projects developed for young people and women. In addition, special emphasis should be placed on school enrolment and the education of children, as well as on accelerated and large-scale training for young people in the trades. Such a policy would allow young people to be shielded from the influence of armed groups and prevent them from joining their ranks. Similarly, there is a need to continue providing reintegration assistance to internally displaced persons.

Fifthly, with regard to the National Recovery and Peacebuilding Plan, I appeal to the Central African Republic's partners to urgently honour the pledges made at the Brussels Conference, because only 30 per cent of pledges made at the Conference have been fulfilled to date.

Sixthly, as regards fighting impunity and the expansion of State authority, fighting impunity does not only concern the armed groups that commit abuses against civilians; it must also include the perpetrators of economic crimes, who, through corruption and embezzlement, deprive the State of the means it needs to assert its authority. We therefore encourage the Government to continue taking appropriate measures to substantially strengthen its authority to combat that scourge.

The people of the Central African Republic have suffered enough. It is therefore extremely urgent that the international community, as represented by the Security Council, take strong and concrete measures and actions to mitigate its unspeakable suffering. I also take this opportunity to make a strong appeal to the political classes, civil society, the forces and all the people of the Central African Republic to make an exceptional, patriotic and collective demonstration for peace and reconciliation in their country.

For my part, I reaffirm the commitment and determination of the African Union and its representatives in Bangui to remain with the people of the Central African Republic in order to find a peaceful solution to the crisis. The sole objective of the African Union is peace and reconciliation for Central Africans. I reaffirm what Mr. Onanga-Anyanga said earlier, namely, that we are working hand in hand, in perfect symbiosis, to effectively implement the African Initiative, to which the Secretary-General has publicly reaffirmed his support.

In conclusion, I wish the Council every success in its work and thank members for their attention and for placing the Central African Republic at the heart of the Council's agenda.

The President: I thank Mr. Nébié for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Garofalo.

Mr. Garofalo (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank you, Mr. President, on behalf of the Community of Sant'Egidio, for the second invitation to address the Security Council regarding the situation in the Central African Republic.

The Secretary-General's visit to Bangui and Bangassou has certainly had a positive impact on the peace and reconciliation process. Through its presence at the highest level, the United Nations is reiterating its full commitment to finding a way out of the crisis in the Central African Republic, despite unanimous agreement that the situation in the country remains very precarious.

The affection with which the Secretary-General was welcomed by the population — which I witnessed first hand — clearly demonstrates that, in spite of difficulties, there is a real need for positive signals to counter the exclusively pessimistic narrative to which I fear we have become too accustomed. We should never lose sight of the fact that the country's chronic instability did not start in 2013, but dates back more than 20 years. In that respect, the deficiencies of the process that are noted by the Secretary-General in his report (S/2017/865) are also the toxic consequences of a long-standing lack of trust, to which we all must react.

In that difficult context, Sant'Egidio has taken the political initiative of holding a meeting in Rome on 19 June, with the specific goal of moving forward and demonstrating that something concrete could be done. With its own means, Sant'Egidio is helping to rebuild the social fabric of the country, improve relations among groups and communities, and strengthen institutions. We believe that direct political dialogue and listening to people on the ground are effective measures. In that regard, I also underscore the positive steps taken by President Touadra towards greater inclusiveness, by expanding the Government.

Following the agreement, we also launched a disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation (DDRR) pilot project, in collaboration with the State and with the support of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA). By the end of the year, we hope to demobilize 600 men in armed groups and to reintegrate them into the Central African Republic armed forces and other civilian programmes.

Following on from the Rome agreement, confidence-building measures were taken with the leadership of political and military movements. We are also committed to providing food to the fighters who will be reintegrated into civil society in the three months between the disarmament process and the start of the reintegration programme. The first concrete results are that some 200 fighters have been disarmed, in accordance with the rules of the DDRR programme, and have been provided with assistance. We now enjoy have greater security and practicability, for example

regarding commercial access to the Bouar-Cameroon corridor, the country's main lifeline.

Not all armed groups have reacted in the same way, obviously. Some of them, including the Front démocratique du peuple centrafricain, the renewed Séléka and the Union des forces démocratiques pour le rassemblement, have reacted more quickly than others. However, the implementation of the pilot project in the eight sites envisioned with all 14 groups is essential to verify the capacity of the movements to respect their commitments.

That initial success should contribute to fostering a new climate of trust throughout the whole country. Hope must become contagious and act as an incentive. We hope to quickly go beyond the initial figures agreed — to disarm 1,000 men. Such a step will demonstrate the feasibility of the disarmament, demobilization, repatriation and reintegration process and reassert the progressive expansion of the authority of the State on broad swaths of territory. Indeed it is a positive step, although lacking an efficient solution in an atmosphere polluted by hatred.

There are others, as underscored in the report of the Secretary-General, in terms of political dialogue, training and rehabilitation of the national armed forces and socioeconomic steps. We are also providing assistance in that regard through sanitation programmes. I believe that the initial success of the disarmament process will determine the credibility of the entire process. We need to demonstrate that it can work. It is important to prove that disarmament, demobilization, repatriation and reintegration is possible, and not just wishful thinking.

At the same time, we need to remain steadfast in protecting civilians, international justice, territorial integrity and the legitimacy of the authority of the State. That is the aim of the road map of the African Union. I would like to thank Special Envoy Moussa Nébié for having demonstrated leadership and a very inclusive approach. The Community of Sant'Egidio is committed to the full success of that initiative. I would also like to thank Economic Community of Central African States — whose member States obviously suffer the main impact of the crisis in the Central African Republic.

Allow me, by way of conclusion, to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Onanga-Anyanga for his devotion and, by extension, thank all of the MINUSCA personnel. Their presence and tireless daily efforts are the major bulwark against chaos and violence.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Garofalo for his briefing.

(*spoke in English*)

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements.

Mr. Bermúdez (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I would like to express my appreciation for the briefings by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Central African Republic, Mr. Parfait Onanga-Anyanga; the Special Representative of the African Union, Mr. Bedializoun Moussa Nébié; and the Head of International Relations of the Community of Sant'Egidio, Mr. Mauro Garofalo.

For several months now, the Central African Republic has swung between consolidating the achievements made since the completion of the political transition period and election of President Touadéra, especially the headway made in the areas of Bangui and Bambari, and a serious deterioration in security conditions in other parts of the country, which has negatively impacted both the humanitarian situation and human rights of the local population.

Uruguay would like to express its profound concern about the ongoing clashes between armed groups in the Central African Republic and the attacks targeting civilians in specific communities, as well as United Nations peacekeeping personnel and humanitarian workers. Those groups continue to destabilize the country and cause the loss of many lives, in addition to the significant displacement of the population.

I take this opportunity to underscore the heroism demonstrated by Spanish Bishop Juan José Aguirre of the Diocese of Bangassou, who, on various occasions since 2014, has served as a human shield to protect all Christian and Muslim followers alike from ruthless militia attacks. We therefore exhort the leaders of the armed groups to spread awareness among their members with a view to committing to an immediate and total ceasefire of hostilities and fulfilling, without restriction, their commitments to the disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation process.

In order to reverse the downward spiral in which the country unfortunately finds itself immersed, it is

critical that the international community continue to encourage and support the efforts of the Government of the Central African Republic in the name of peace and stability, which requires urgent, decisive and consistent measures. I would like to commend the active role played by Secretary-Genera António Guterres in that regard. The organization of the high-level ministerial meeting on the political, security and humanitarian situation in the Central African Republic, which was held on the margins of the seventy-second session of the General Assembly in September, and his recent visit to the country from 24 to 27 October are clear examples of his resolute commitment, which all Member States should support decisively.

We also recognize the important efforts made by the African Union through the African Initiative for Peace and Reconciliation, as well as the efforts of the Community of Sant'Egidio through the Rome agreement of 19 June, representatives of which are present today and have reiterated their commitment to continue supporting the Government and the people of the Central African Republic in their quest for peace. Uruguay encourages all Central Africans, the Government, armed groups and all segments of society to commit to those initiatives and work towards their implementation.

The current mandate of the Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), established in accordance with resolution 2301 (2016), is drawing to a close. In our opinion, the Mission has played a key role in keeping the peace in Central African Republic, especially through its good offices and support for the peace process, protecting civilians and monitoring human rights violations, as well as through its support to the Government to expand the authority of the State and strengthen its institutional capacities.

Uruguay commends the work carried out by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations with respect to the strategic review of the Mission. We express our full support for its assessment of the current situation, its findings and its recommendations for the future mandate of MINUSCA, including the suggestion to increase the maximum amount of authorized resources. The new mandate of the Mission will require greater prioritization of tasks so as to better adapt to the current situation on the ground.

However, it is worthwhile to point out that, however much improvement in capacity-building and strengthening of the Mission's mandate, a peacekeeping mission in and of itself cannot, nor is it its responsibility, to substitute for a State or stabilize an entire country. Such achievements can be made only through the shared work of all national stakeholders, with the ongoing support from their international partners.

To conclude, allow me to pay tribute to the Blue Helmets who have lost their lives this year in the discharge of their duties as the consequence of cowardly attacks, which we condemn in the strongest possible terms. The security of the members of MINUSCA must be at the heart of our attention — a necessary condition for them to be able to fulfil their mandate. We must remember that attacks against Blue Helmets may be considered to be war crimes and that their perpetrators must be held accountable and brought to justice.

Mr. Inchauste Jordán (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): Bolivia is grateful for the briefings provided by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Central African Republic, Mr. Parfait Onanga-Anyanga, and by the Special Representative for the African Union for the Central African Republic, Mr. Bedializoun Moussa Nébié, as well as the important statement delivered by Mr. Mauro Garofalo on behalf of the Community of Sant'Egidio. We also welcome the presence of Her Excellency the Permanent Representative for the Central African Republic.

We would like to again express our concern about the continuing environment of violence in the Central African Republic. The situation of insecurity, asymmetrical attacks and ongoing intercommunal clashes severely impact the civilian population, in particular those who are most vulnerable, including boys and girls. It is also further eroding the humanitarian situation. In that regard, Bolivia condemns the constant attacks perpetrated by armed groups against civilians and the personnel of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA).

We value and commend the members of the Mission — military, police and civilian personnel — who carry out their work in a volatile and extremely high-risk environment. The protection of civilians, security coverage, support to the Central African Republic State to expand its authority, inter alia, are activities that

unquestionably strengthen the peace process, which, unfortunately, has not been concluded to date.

It is clear that the difficult challenges in the process of building political stability in the country must be addressed through inclusive dialogue, consistent demonstration of political will by all stakeholders in the country, as well as through a serious and sustained commitment by all parties to the conflict.

We welcome and value the recent visit of the Secretary-General to the Central African Republic, in which he reaffirmed the solidarity of the international community, in particular in dealing with the challenges of maintaining peace and security, the building of State institutions and its establishment throughout the territory, as well as national reconciliation and development.

Furthermore, fighting and violence have led to worrisome consequences, and therefore drastic humanitarian consequences. According to data from the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the report of the Secretary-General (S/2017/865), during the reporting period approximately 50 per cent of the population depended upon external support to survive, 2.4 million Central Africans required urgent humanitarian assistance, and there had been 600,000 new internally displaced persons, totalling 1.1 million people since 2016; in other words, one in five people suffer the effects of forced displacement. Five hundred tousand refugees live in neighbouring countries, such as Cameroon, Chad, the Congo and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Food insecurity affects one in four people, reaching the figure of 2 million people at risk in the Central African Republic.

Furthermore, violations of international humanitarian law further aggravate the situation of hundreds of victims; men, women and children who are subjected to sexual violence, trafficking in persons and other crimes. We believe it is crucial to at last operationalize the Special Criminal Court. We encourage MINUSCA and the United Nations Development Programme to continue efforts to that end with a view to combaingt impunity and prosecuting those responsible for war crimes.

With that in mind, Bolivia once again calls on all the armed groups to lay down their arms, set aside sectarian interests that prevent fruitful dialogue and achieve agreement to benefit of the civilian population and stabilize the country and submit to demobilization, disarmament and reintegration.

Aware of the difficult process that the Central African people are going through without having achieved stability and peace, we see with concern that entire communities have been torn apart by the vicious cycle of violence. Opportunities to achieve progress in the establishment of peace and stability seem distant.

Against that backdrop, we welcome the active support and constant participation of regional organizations, the African Union, the Economic Community of Central African States, the International Conference of the Great Lakes Region and neighbouring countries, whose support has been and will continue to be essential, through political pacification and cooperation initiatives in a lasting reconciliation process based on the principle of African solutions for African conflicts and strict respect for the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of the Central African Republic.

We must underscore all the efforts of the Government of the Central African Republic, led by President Touadera, in the search for ways to establish an inclusive dialogue and understanding, in addition to carrying out important reforms, such as establishing the national strategy for security sector reform, which was approved on 4 September; the establishment of 14 courts around the country; in addition to the adoption of the national reconciliation programme on 11 September, the establishment of a truth, justice, reparations and reconciliation commission; and the road map for the operationalization of the National Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms Commission. Those are important steps to be added to the efforts of the international community.

In conclusion, we echo the observations and recommendations of the Secretary-General, first, with regard to the strengthening of the capabilities of MINUSCA, and to provide it greater flexibility and enable it to better deploy in the areas of greatest risk. However, and as mentioned by the Secretary-General, the Mission will not restore peace alone; the people of the Central African Republic themselves have the primary responsibility for bringing peace and stability to the country.

The full and committed support of the international community, the United Nations and regional

organizations must assist the people of Central Africa to establish peace and security.

Mr. Iliichev (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Parfait Onanga-Anyanga, as well as the Special Representative of the African Union, Mr. Moussa Nebie, and the representative of the Community of Sant'Egidio, Mr. Mauro Garofalo, for their detailed briefings.

We share the concerns about the continuing situation of military and political tension in the country and the fact that clashes between groups are increasingly ethnic and confessional in nature. Of course, civilians are the ones who suffer the most. The top priority of all parties to the conflict should be to provide humanitarian access to the victims. The authorities must create the conditions for a safe and voluntary return of refugees and internally displaced persons to their homes.

The already difficult situation is further complicated by the fact that the authorities actually control only the capital, Bangui, and the local Government bodies are paralysed or lacking in the rest of the country. The adoption of the national strategy for the restoration of State authority on 8 September and the appointment of prefects and subprefects are certainly steps in the right direction, but much remains to be done to do.

With the signing in Rome, on 19 June, of a peaceful political agreement between the Government and armed groups, real prospects for normalizing the situation in the Central African Republic have opened up. We support the steps outlined in that document towards stabilization and establishing a ceasefire throughout the country, lifting restrictions on the free movement of goods and people, releasing illegally detained persons and ensuring that illegal armed groups recognzie authorities elected in the 2015-2016 elections as legitimate. We believe it is necessary for all parties to the agreement to undertake additional efforts to quickly implement its provisions.

We support the steps being taken by Bangui to reform the security sector and resume control over the entire territory of the country. Those steps are aimed at contributing, including with the support of the international community, to resolving the issues and tasks, many of which were justly mentioned in the recent report of the Secretary-General (S/2017/865), and they contribute to implementing the national defence plan approved by President Touadera on 4 September, which includes the gradual transfer of responsibility for State affairs in the country to the legitimate authorities.

We note the efforts by the Government of the Central African Republic aimed at ensuring operational and combat readiness and rapidly deploying two battalions of its armed forces, which, as we understand it, should form the backbone of the future unified armed forces of the country. The Central African authorities will need to work together to ensure that the justice system starts working properly, with a focus on building national capacities.

Temporary emergency measures by peacekeepers and the delayed establishment of the Special Criminal Court are not a panacea for the country's problems in combating impunity. International experience has shown that various courts with international support are not very effective and are costly.

It is also important to create favourable conditions for the implementation of the African Initiative for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic. Also, the road map for a Central African settlement adopted in the Libreville on 17 July must be fully implemented. In that connection, we stress the importance of coordinating and harmonizing all the peace initiatives related to the Central African Republic.

The Blue Helmets are playing an important stabilizing role in the Central African Republic. We are ready to carefully study the proposal of the Secretary-General on increasing the military component of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), given the difficult situation in the country. At the same time, we want to stress once again that we must be careful in cooperating with troop-contributing countries. It is unacceptable for an entire contingent to be removed due to sexual abuses committed by a few individual peacekeepers and to have no substitute for the unit for an extended period of time, which seriously undermines the operational potential of the mission.

It is essential to take coherent steps to address the challenges facing the Central African community and to allocate funds from international partners and donors, including the resources pledged at the Brussels Conference for the Central African Republic in November 2016. In that context, we encourage Bangui to create a transparent and effective national system in order to manage international aid.

Russia, as a participant in the international support group on the Central African Republic, intends to continue actively promoting the peace process in the Central African Republic, where Russian air transport resources have already made a significant contribution to MINUSCA operations.

Mr. Temenov (Kazakhstan): We thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Parfait Onanga-Anyanga for his insightful briefing, and we thank African Union Special Representative Bédializoun Moussa Nébié for joining us today. We would also like to warmly welcome the Head of International Relations of Sant'Egidio, Mr. Mauro Garofalo, who brings the invaluable expertise of the Community in the mediation process for national reconciliation in the Central African Republic and the wider region.

Kazakhstan is deeply concerned about the progressively deteriorating security and humanitarian situation, marked by growing sectarian and ethnic violence in the Central African Republic. That is despite the significant achievements of the Government, as well as regional and international partners, in advancing peacebuilding initiatives in the crisis-torn country.

We are confident that the recent visit and active solidarity by Secretary-General Guterres to the Central African Republic will provide an impetus for further progress in all the efforts to consolidate peace. We strongly believe that our focus should be on the four interlinking components highlighted by the Secretary-General during his trip to the Central African Republic, namely, security, State-building, national reconciliation and development. Religious factions in different parts of the country that had not existed before are alarming indicators. We urge all political, community and religious leaders in the Central African Republic to work towards true national reconciliation.

The international community must be engaged in supporting national authorities to continue the political process at this critical moment. We welcome the various mediation initiatives of the European Union and the African Union, including the African initiative for peace and reconciliation for accelerating the peace process, together with the World Bank. The role of the subregional efforts such as those of the Sant'Egidio Community are significantly critical.

At the same time, it is crucial to implement the National Recovery and Peacebuilding Plan, which brings together all the relevant stakeholders based on an integrated and coordinated approach under the principle of national ownership. We call on all donors to fulfil their Brussels commitments to ensure that the National Recovery and Peacebuilding Plan is fully funded, so that it can realize its impact on the stabilization of the country.

We commend the efforts of the Central African Republic Government for its initiatives, such as implementing the national defence plan, developing a national strategy to combat the illicit trafficking in natural resources, operationalizing the Special Criminal Court, reforming the security sector and preventing impunity with the support of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA). Another priority focus is to work closely with the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, combat sexual violence against women and implement the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme.

We express our full support for the mandate of MINUSCA, particularly in its ongoing efforts to restore security. In the wake of the resurgence of violence in the east and south of the country, which exposed the limits of the overall operational response of MINUSCA, we agree that the Mission should focus on its core peacekeeping tasks and prioritize support to the national and local political processes. It should adjust its capacity to protect civilians and facilitate the creation of a secure environment for the delivery of humanitarian assistance.

In conclusion, we would like to stress the need to support the national dialogue, reinforce the legitimacy of the Government and its authority and to revitalize mediation, given that the solution is political and not military. Likewise, MINUSCA, in coordination with the United Nations system, will need to strengthen the security-development nexus through greater investments in socioeconomic development and the provision of basic services, youth education and employment, while simultaneously addressing the deteriorating humanitarian situation.

Finally, we pay tribute to Special Representative Onanga-Anyanga and MINUSCA for their valiant service under such hazardous conditions, and we endorse the extension of the MINUSCA mandate.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of the Central African Republic.

Ms. Kpongo (Central African Republic) (*spoke in French*): I would like to begin by paying special tribute to His Excellency Secretary-General António Guterres for having kept his promise to visit my country, the Central African Republic, a few months after taking office. It is our hope that his visit will bring about change to the tragic situation we are experiencing in the Central African Republic.

Like those who preceded me, I would like warmly to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of November, while wishing you every success in the accomplishment of this noble task. I am certain that your rich diplomatic experience and great personal qualities are an indicator of the success of your mandate. Allow me to also express my deep admiration to your predecessor, His Excellency Mr. François Delattre, for the enormous workload to which he brought so much energy during his mandate.

The visit of the Secretary-General recently made to Bangui is a historic and symbolic journey of great significance for the Central African people, who have been cut to the quick. His four-day stay certainly provided an opportunity for the Secretary-General and the large delegation that accompanied him to measure the extent of the challenges still to be met, particularly the security and humanitarian challenges. His meetings with all stakeholders of the Central African crisis enabled him to take stock of what remains to be done.

His appeal to the international community to pay closer attention to the situation in our country reinforces our conviction that the United Nations — and especially the Security Council — will take substantial decisions and measures in the preparation and adoption of the draft resolution renewing the mandate of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA). In that regard, I would like to commend the tireless efforts of Head of Mission Onanga-Anyanga, whose presence in this Chamber is a source of encouragement for us. We cannot praise him enough for his dynamism and unwavering commitment to working with Central African authorities in order to find ways and means to extricate our country from this crisis.

I must also commend the outstanding collaboration and dialogue between the Government and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in addressing all the delicate aspects of the crisis situation in the Central African Republic. The briefing that he has made on the situation in the Central African Republic was very eloquent, and therefore I will not repeat what he said. The situation continues to be of grave concern at all levels. I also wish to thank the Special Representative of the African Union for his briefing, which provided us with a greater understanding of the situation and that it requires greater attention and many resources to assist the African Union in carrying out the road map.

We are turning to the members of the Security Council, calling on them for their support in the form of providing MINUSCA with a new mandate that is commensurate with the challenges that the Mission's Head has just outlined for us. Those challenges, as I said, are numerous, and we are expecting flexibility and understanding from Council members.

The President: There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers. I would like to thank the briefers for the quality of their statements.

I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 11.10 a.m.